The Deuteronomists as Loyal Opposition

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I. Introduction

One could cite a plethora of Pentateuchal passages that suggest "Loyal Opposition" in the Torah.[1] These passages counter what appear to have been commonly held ideas of the time. A narrative telling of a younger brother surpassing the eldest son, as in the case of Jacob and Esau, allows the reversal of apparently normal inheritance rights for the larger purposes of God. The traditions of Exodus, in which slaves are freed from terrible bondage and consequently formed into a nation, bespeak a view of life that centers on hope for hopeless people to find a new existence in relationship with God. Even the legal corpora of the Torah, with, for example, their emerging concern for the status of women, suggest the stirrings of basic principles of fairness by which faithful people express commitment to God and solidarity with persons.

We will narrow our purview considerably, however, and examine two related themes of the Torah: love of God and love of persons. Perhaps there is no more natural place to focus than Deuteronomy, a book that, in ways similar to the connotation of the phrase "Loyal Opposition," uses political rhetoric to express religious obligations. If the twin ideas of love of God and love of persons are central to the identity and mission of the Church, as this symposium suggests, then it is fruitful to consider again this document as foundational for the Loyal Opposition.

The covenantal language of Deuteronomy clearly declares the correlating concepts of love of God and love of persons. Deuteronomy understands Israel's identity as inextricably bound to the nation's exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Deuteronomy also requires that Israel demonstrate covenantal solidarity with others. Within the expression of these companion concepts one may recognize the early stirrings of a Loyal Opposition understanding of Christian obligation, for life within the Kingdom

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of God entails both whole-hearted allegiance to God and whole-hearted affection for others.

At least two additional features of Deuteronomy suggest that this text is applicable for an understanding of Christian discipleship along the lines of Loyal Opposition. First, the rhetorical features of the Deuteronomic sermons contemporize the message for its hearers. This technique requires faithful readers of the text in any age to draw near to listen to these ancient, and yet appropriate, demands for exclusive devotion to God and for compassionate living among people. As if it is being uttered for the first time, Deuteronomy addresses "us," "today" and "now" to respond to its demands for an unswerving love of God and an unstinting love of others.[2]

As an example of this contemporizing movement, note the emphasis on "today" in Deuteronomy 5:3. The verse reads:

לֹא אֶת־אֲבֹתֵינוּ כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת
כִּי אִתָּנוּ אֲנַחְנוּ אֵלֶּה פֹּה הַיּוֹם כֻּלָּנוּ חַיִּים׃

This verse may be translated rather woodenly, "Not with our ancestors did Yahweh cut this covenant, but with us, we, these ones here today, all of us alive."[3] As Patrick Miller comments in reading this verse,

> The text uses seven words heaped one upon another to stress the contemporary claim of the covenant. The effect is clear. The hortatory character of the chapter and the book combines with the actualizing language of this verse to cut across all the generations and renew the covenant afresh with *all* hearers of these words.[4]

In addition to this contemporizing rhetoric, the development of Deuteronomy itself also suggests that there may be points of contact between Deuteronomy and a view of Christian discipleship as Opposition. The Deuteronomic writers or editors, as outlined by Weinfeld and others, stood apart within a plurality of religious expressions in their own day.[5] In like manner, the contemporary Loyal Follower of God may at times stand over against both the so-called secular views of life and the prevailing, and comfortably familiar, patterns of religious thinking. Thus, we suggest that in the promulgation of the book of Deuteronomy one may see an incipient Loyal Opposition party, a group asserting the distinctive ideas of the love of Yahweh alone and of the love of others despite competing concepts. We will review briefly these twin mandates to love as they occur in Deuteronomy.[6]

II. Covenant Love of God in Deuteronomy

It is well known that Deuteronomy resembles Ancient Near Eastern treaties in general and the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (VTE) in particular. By means of these Vassal Treaties, dated to 672 BC, Esarhaddon imposed loyalty oaths on his vassals to assure their continued fidelity to Esarhaddon's successor Assurbanipal. Significantly, both VTE and

Deuteronomy demand wholehearted devotion to the suzerain.[7] Of course, Deuteronomy stretches the model of these fealty oaths by extracting a pledge to Yahweh as suzerain and by placing the stipulations of the agreement in the category of divine law.

Clearly a political model was pressed into service to express religious ideology, a proposition familiar to those who would discuss Christian life in terms of a Loyal Opposition Society. Weinfeld affirms this connection, and its peculiar appropriateness for ancient Israel, when he writes,

> The pattern that served a political need in the ancient Near East came to serve a religious need in Israel. The religious use of this pattern was especially possible in Israel, for only the religion of Israel demanded exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel, a jealous God, who would suffer no rival. The religion of Israel therefore precluded the possibility of dual or multiple loyalties, such as were permitted in other religions in which the believer was bound in diverse relationships to many gods. So the stipulation in political treaties demanding exclusive loyalty to one king corresponds strikingly to the religious belief in one single, exclusive Deity.[8]

Such an unrivaled loyalty to God, a loyalty precluding other potential commitments, appears to be the point of Christian discipleship as well. As in the case of the Deuteronomists in ancient Israel, this loyalty may even place the modern believer in conflict with prevailing religious practice as well.

Deuteronomy reflects a change in the spiritual life of ancient Israel in the seventh century BC.[9] Deuteronomy achieved a new status during the reforms of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23). The ancient Loyal Opposition gained enough power with the Josianic Reform and "discovery" of the "book of the law" to institute its vision of religious life. With Josiah, the Reform Movement received the royal imprimatur and this led to the execution of the ideals of Deuteronomy.[10]

As an aside, the question of the changing dynamics when the Opposition becomes the Government, as in the case of Josiah's reforms, is beyond the immediate scope of this paper. In light of texts describing the conduct of Holy War or the coercive imposition of the Deuteronomic reforms, one must consider how the Opposition, as Government, can or should wield power in a righteous manner when the opportunity is presented. Our purpose here is to look at the Josianic Reform as indicative of the kinds of concerns the Deuteronomic authors had and the implications of these concerns for Christian discipleship.

The impact of Josiah's promulgation of Deuteronomy is seen most clearly in the narrowing of the Israelite cult.[11] With centralization, and the requisite elimination of provincial cult centers, the Reformers institute the Opposition's idea that Yahweh alone should be worshipped in the manner and in the place of Yahweh's choosing. This cult restriction coincided with the development of the "name theology" combating the idea of God actually dwelling in any shrine, even the divinely appointed place from among the tribes. This emphasis on the spiritual dwelling of Yahweh, which perhaps lessened the importance of cultic performance, was joined by an enlargement of humanistic expression within the covenant, a matter that we shall take up later in this paper.

For the moment, we wish to focus on the requirement of complete loyalty to Yahweh.

In this regard, the adaptation of a treaty structure for Deuteronomy is decisive. The VTE included strong words regarding loyalty to the suzerain followed by stipulations outlining the responsibilities of the loyal subject. In Deuteronomy, where the sovereign is Yahweh, some of the stipulations deal with proper worship and religious observances as issues reflecting loyalty to the divine suzerain. These loyalty stipulations are joined by concerns for the treatment of human beings.

As an example of the basic stipulation of allegiance to Yahweh, let us consider briefly the Shema, a familiar segment dealing with loyalty. The section 4:44-11:32 begins with a review of the Ten Words, principles that center on the primary relationship to Yahweh alone and on proper relationships within the community.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema, expounds upon this first idea, the fundamental relationship with Yahweh. These verses read,

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These verses place at the forefront one of the main concerns of Deuteronomy and, derivatively, of the Loyal Opposition. The first matter is a strong reiteration of the principle that there should be no gods but Yahweh. The people of God find their identity in their attachment to this deity alone and this commitment shapes the way in which they are to live in the world.[12] The Shema is a positive restatement of the first commandment against the worship of other gods. This affirmation will set the inner compass of the individual and guide daily conduct in the world. Thus, for the faithful person in ancient Israel, as with the Loyal Opposition today, the challenge becomes the reapplication of the primary loyalty to God in ever-new situations in life.[13]

The connection of the Shema to the basic concerns enunciated in the Ten Commandments in particular and Deuteronomy in general provides a starting place for life in the Kingdom. As Miller suggests,

> Focusing on the Great Commandment and the Decalogue identifies a center around which other things revolve. It enables a reduction of the whole to its most important point, spelling it out in specifics and implications. A theological structure is thereby given to the covenantal community, one that continues throughout its life. It operates on two axes: the relation of faith and love or obedience, as succinctly set forth in the Shema, and the relationship to God and others as embodied in the Ten Commandments. Readers of the Book of Deuteronomy, therefore, are constantly being given clues to what matters most for those who live under and with this God.[14]

The Shema expresses the requirement of allegiance to Yahweh, which echoes the first

commandment, after affirming Yahweh's uniqueness and unity. A syntactic connection joins the command to "hear" (šm') the declaration of Yahweh's uniqueness in verse 4 and the verb requiring the faithful person to "love" (w'hbt) Yahweh uniquely in verse 5.[15] The unity of Yahweh requires an undivided love from Yahweh's subjects; Yahweh is "one" therefore you shall love Yahweh "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

This whole-hearted love excludes any rival for the affections of the Beloved One. In VTE, Esarhaddon entreats his vassals to love the king as one loves oneself, or, in other words, to be completely loyal to the suzerain.[16] Though it is possible, albeit highly unlikely, that the vassal could have had a measure of affection for the sovereign, the primary usage of the term "love," *ra'āmu* in VTE and 'hb in Deuteronomy, has to do with the faithful expression of loyalty by means of obedience to the covenant stipulations. In fact, to make the connection between the political and spiritual arenas, the treaty language used in Deuteronomy 6:5 "contains all of the elements found in the treaties: devotion with all the heart, with all the soul (i.e., readiness to give one's life), and provision of might and force when necessary" [17]

The following verses of the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, complement this call to unmitigated fidelity. Verse 6 demands that the faithful take "these words" to heart as a constant companion reminding one of the need for loyalty.[18] Verse 7 requires the inculcation (wĕšinnantām) of the next generation by means of constant recitation of "these words." This theme, the education of the children, reappears in 6:20-25 to end this segment. Verses 8-9 prescribe the use of external anchors to complement and strengthen the internal reminders of verse 6-7.

The Shema's theme of total fidelity continues in Deuteronomy 6:10-25. These verses demanding allegiance are particularly applicable to our concern for the Loyal Opposition.

Deuteronomy 6:10-19 recognizes that Israel has received freely a fully appointed residence. This grant of plenty, contrasting with a past of poverty, should cause the Israelite to remain always faithful to Yahweh. According to 6:13-15, the people must serve Yahweh, a jealous Deity, with steady devotion and guard against faltering fealty. One notes that the abundance of material blessing provides a challenge for the faithful to remain faithful and not to test the limits of the Suzerain's patience.

These warnings against complacency in the face of promised plenty indicate that Deuteronomy understands that comfort may conflict with the performance of the injunction to love God and love persons. This warning provides a parallel for Christian ethics today, for the Loyal Opposition may need to live against a tide of material blessing, ignoring the inducements of enjoyment and excess, if good fortune leads to vacillation.[19]

The evidence could be multiplied many times over to demonstrate that Deuteronomy attempts to foist upon Israel a restricted reverence for the one Yahweh. The existence of this program, coupled with other biblical and extrabiblical evidence, indicates that the religious climate of ancient Israel was more pluralistic than the writers of Deuteronomy sanctioned.[20] In such a climate, those who held to the ideas of Deuteronomy appear to have been an opposition party asserting their brand of monotheistic and Yahwistic faith upon the people.

This Deuteronomic ideal, the stipulation of undivided allegiance to God in a time of pluralism, forms an interesting link to the concept of Christian ethics as Opposition. The notion of love of God in Deuteronomy arises out of the political climate of the Ancient

Near East, in which the term "love" in the covenants generally denotes uncompromising loyalty to the suzerain by means of severing all other ties and by abiding by the specific stipulations of the loyalty oath.[21] In this vein, the political idea "Loyal Opposition" may be a useful way to express a view of Christian ethics in which the believer adheres exclusively to God as Sovereign, even in the face of competing loyalties.

III. Covenant Love of Persons in Deuteronomy

Beside the love of God, the love of persons forms a corollary issue of life in the Kingdom of God. Generally speaking, chapters 12-26 of Deuteronomy take up this topic. One notes, however, that, despite the humanistic emphasis of Deuteronomy 12-26, care for others is a subsidiary theme to loyalty to Yahweh. The first of the stipulations outlined in these chapters has to do with the proper worship of Yahweh. This placement of the topic forces one to recognize again the primacy of this issue for Deuteronomy and for the faithful reader today.

Having noticed the continued emphasis on the proper regard for Yahweh, the reader also notes the peculiar tone of Deuteronomy in its stipulations for daily life. Predictably, the ethical demands of Deuteronomy 12-26 deviate from the politically oriented stipulations of the vassal treaties, which have much to do with the preservation of the dynasty.[22] Deuteronomy uncompromisingly demands the faithful to love all, including disenfranchised persons on the fringe of society, such as the poor, the outsiders and the widows. This ethical demand to love others entails doing the right thing for others. One notices this particular humanistic tendency of Deuteronomy when comparing the social laws of Deuteronomy with parallel injunctions in Exodus.[23]

For example, note the change in the law regarding the relationship between an Israelite and a stranger. Exodus 22:20 (Eng. 22:21) reads, "You shall not wrong or oppress (lō'–tônеh wĕlō' tilḥāṣennû) a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Similarly, Exodus 23:9 records, "You shall not oppress (lō' tilḥāṣ) a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Both of these verses prohibit the Israelite from wronging or afflicting the stranger. The memory of the affliction of former bondage serves as the motivation.

In contrast to these two laws prohibiting wrongful action, Deuteronomy 10:19 exhorts the Israelite to a more difficult response toward the stranger. Once again, the experience of slavery is to motivate the action of the Israelite. The verse reads, "You shall also love (wa'ăhabtem) the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

This shift from preventing malevolence to prescribing beneficence displays the inchoate humanism of Deuteronomy. The loyal subject of Yahweh will exceed the requirement not to harm another and, reflecting the character of the suzerain described in Deuteronomy 10:17-18, love the resident alien by actively seeking the alien's welfare in matters such as provision, inclusion and justice.[24]

A particularly clear case revealing the distinctive flavor of Deuteronomy is the law concerning the release of slaves. These laws deal with those who have been subjected to servitude due to economic misfortune beyond the help a loan could provide.[25] The material of Deuteronomy 15:12-18, when compared with the similar material in the

Covenant Code (Exodus 21:2-11), reveals some of the distinctives of Deuteronomy.

Both passages begin with a statement of the setting. Both Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12 declare that a Hebrew slave must be freed in the seventh year. Deuteronomy surpasses Exodus by including a female slave in this requirement for release.[26] Essentially the initial point of the laws is the same: Hebrew slaves must be released in their sabbatical year.

The humanitarian nature of Deuteronomy, in contrast to Exodus, is displayed in the respective descriptions of the status of the individual about to be released. In Exodus 21:3-6, the freed slave reverts to his original state before he was enslaved. Specifically, if a previously single male was given a wife while in servitude, he faces a difficult choice. He may gain freedom, in which case he must leave his wife and any children behind, or he may choose to stay with his family and in slavery for life. Deuteronomy 15:16 does not deal with the matter of the slave's marital status, but suggests that a slave may freely choose to remain in the master's household out of a sense of love or loyalty.

The manner of manumission also declares the contrast between Exodus and Deuteronomy. According to Exodus 21:2, the slave is released in the seventh year, without debt (ḥinnām). Deuteronomy 15:13-14 expands this injunction by requiring that the master not send out the freed slave empty-handed (rêqām), but that the master would provide liberally (ha'ănêq ta'ănîq) from his bounty.[27] The master must adorn the slave with hands full of the necessities for starting a new life, with provisions from flock, field and vineyard. In this regard, the master recognizes the contribution made to his household by the slave during six years of service.[28]

In addition to its appearance in the socio-moral laws, the humanistic vein of Deuteronomy emerges in its cultic ordinances. The law of cult centralization in Deuteronomy 12 is punctuated with exhortations regarding the Levite, the slave, and the maidservant (v 12, 18, 19).[29] The legislation on the first fruit offering in Deuteronomy 26:1-11 expands the requirement from Exodus 23:19 in two ways. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 includes a historical liturgy or Credo (vv 5-10) and appends a prescription to include the Levites and aliens in sharing the feast of God's bounty (v 11). The law of the tithe, which follows the first fruit legislation in Deuteronomy 26:12-15, specifies that the Levites, aliens, orphans and widows should be the beneficiaries of the giving of the tithe. Such concern for persons on the fringes of society is presented as a fitting link between the proper worship of God and the everyday life of God's people.[30]

Regardless of the precise origin of this incipient humanism, it is clear that Deuteronomy reflects an advance over earlier legislation in the area of ethical development. Deuteronomy, despite some passages exhibiting a programmatic zeal, moves beyond its predecessors in promoting an expansive ethic to complement its restrictive theology. Since all persons are under the one God, so all persons are to be the recipients of covenant care. This kind of inclusive concern provides a model for the Loyal Opposition in the Church.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper we have considered the contribution of Deuteronomy to an understanding of Christian ethics as Loyal Opposition. Since the writers of Deuteronomy adapted a

political document, one which demanded an exclusive allegiance on the part of a vassal to a king, to express a vision of loyal service to Yahweh, we suggested that Deuteronomy is formative for the Loyal Opposition. The use of political terminology, such as Covenant, Love and Opposition, suggests points of contact between the views of Deuteronomy and those of modern believers.

Additionally, the authors of Deuteronomy modified the treaty format in decisive ways to present the book as a mosaic of sermons that speak to both ancient and modern hearers. Major sections and smaller segments of the book contain calls for obedience to Torah. This demand corresponds to the point of a good sermon, namely, to lead to a life changing response on the part of the hearer.[31] Deuteronomy seeks to motivate the hearer to remain loyal to Yahweh and to portray such a commitment within the community. These are themes fitting for believers of any age.

We noted two themes of Deuteronomy, love for God and love for others, and suggested that these two ideas are the heart of Christian ethics. To be sure, the first matter, loyalty to God, is the consuming passion of Deuteronomy. Faithful people are called to affirm an unswerving loyalty to the God who has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with them.

The second matter, loyalty within the community, forms a secondary theme within Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomic additions to previous laws, for instance, attest to an emerging humanism. To be sure, the viewpoint of Deuteronomy leaves room for further development. In this regard, the sermonic reapplication of texts reveals not only the views of the writers of Deuteronomy, but also provides a model of what faithful communities must do, reinterpret the message of God's grace for each new generation.

For the Loyal Opposition, one notes that a past authoritative word may not prove to provide the final word for a later generation. Contemporary issues require the reappropriation of earlier ideas. The function of the Opposition may be to challenge the Church to evaluate its theology and praxis in order to determine their appropriateness for current issues. By means of its persuasive, not coercive, power, the Loyal Opposition calls the Church to loyalty to God and commitment to persons.

Notes

1. It is a privilege to write this article to honor Bob Lyon. Since our first meeting at Asbury Theological Seminary, Bob has challenged me to grow as a student and as a servant. I shall always be grateful for the surprises of grace that have come as a result of following Bob's model of strong commitment to God and to people.

2. For instance, the phrase hayyôm occurs in Deuteronomy 1:10, 39; 2:18, 25; 4:4, 8, 26, 39, 40; 5:1, 3; 6:6; 7:11; 8:1, 11, 19; 9:1, 3; 10:13; 11:2, 8, 13, 26, 27, 28, 32; 12:8; 13:19; 15:5, 15; 19:9; 20:3; 26:3,17, 18; 27:1, 4, 10; 28:1, 13, 14, 15; 29:9, 11, 12, 14[2], 17; 30:2, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19; 31:2, 21, 27; 32:46. Variations of this phrase, such as hayyôm hazzeh, 'ad hayyôm hazzeh, and kayyôm hazzeh could also be noted. The term wĕ'attâ, occurring, for example, in 2:13; 4:1; 5:25; 10:12, 22; 12:9; 26:10; 31:19; 32:39, complements the contemporary focus of the document by imagining the reader as hearing the words of Moses.

3. Author's translation. Other biblical quotes, unless indicated, are from the NRSV.

4. Patrick D. Miller Jr., *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1990), p. 67.

5. For extended discussions about these matters, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Anchor Bible, 5 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991) and Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

6. Besides calling people to a deep devotion to Yahweh, Deuteronomy may also indicate some deeper levels of contrast with Israelite society in general. For instance, the development of Israelite monotheism stands in stark contrast to the general polytheistic or monolatrous concepts that held sway for a time in Israel. Israel's emerging monotheism challenged the prevailing religious structures of its day and formed a new center from which to encourage ethical decision-making. Ultimately, this viewpoint left its stamp on the Hebrew Bible in general and the Torah in particular as the dominant perspective, but this precedence was gained over time.

7. As a significant point of comparison, the order of the curses in VTE parallels the order of the curses in Deuteronomy 28:23-35. It is clear that the pattern in Deuteronomy is derivative, having been borrowed from a list such as the one in VTE, which organizes the curses, by the hierarchy of the gods. See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 7.

8. Ibid., p. 8.

9. "The transition from Torah as a specific instruction to the sacred "book of the Torah" of the Josianic period marked a turning point in Israel's spiritual life. The ritual instructions, which had been kept in priestly esoteric circles, were now written by scribes and wise men (cf. Jer 8:8) and became part of the national lore." Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 18.

10. Religious leaders in sympathy with the views expressed by Deuteronomy guided young King Josiah in his reign. Since these advisors trained up Josiah in the ways he should go, it should not appear as a surprise that Josiah would support their overwhelming reform movement when he became an adult. From a conversation with Dr. J. Edward Wright.

11. Regarding this issue, see Weinfeld's section entitled, "Deuteronomy As Turning Point in Israelite Religion" (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, pp. 37-44).

12. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, p. 98.

13. Miller points out the repetition of this theme in Deuteronomy 6:12-15; 7:8-10; 16b, 19b; 8:11, 15, 19; 9:1; 10:12-13; 11:1, 13, 16, 18-22, 28b; 13:2-5, 6, 10, 13; 18:9; 26:16-17; 29:26; 30:2b, 6, 8, 10, 16-17 (Miller, *Deuteronomy*, p. 98).

14. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 15-16.

15. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 351.

16. "As indicated above, love with all the heart means sole recognition of the beloved to the exclusion of any rival. Indeed, "love" in the ancient Near East connotes loyalty. Thus, when the suzerain demands loyalty from his vassal, he adjures him that he shall love (*ra'œmu*) the king as he loves himself (*VTE*, lines 266-68)." Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 351.

17. Ibid., p. 351.

18. It does not appear necessary for our purpose here to determine whether the phrase "these words" (haddĕbārîm hā'ēlleh) refers to the preceding proclamation of Yahweh's uniqueness, to the Ten Commandments, or to the general parenetic discourse of Deuteronomy.

19. Deuteronomy 6:16 warns against testing God as at Massah. This reference provides an interesting contrast to the inducements of wealth, though the basic concern is the same. At Massah, the Israelites tested Yahweh by wondering whether Yahweh could supply their needs. In Canaan, the Israelites are warned against testing God when God has provided more than needed. In either situation, want or excess, the main matter is obedience to the divine commands.

20. Evidence, such as that from Kuntillet Ajrud, may indicate the identification of Yahweh with a variety of sites and of Yahweh with Asherah. This would indicate non-centralized worship and, perhaps, the worship of deities other than Yahweh in ancient Israel. For an inscriptional example, note *brkt 'tkm lyhwh ßmrn wl'ßrth* (Zeev Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud. A Religious Centre From The Time Of The Judaean Monarchy On The Border Of Sinai.* Cat. No. 175. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Spertus Hall. Spring 1978. no page). For discussion and extensive bibliography regarding Yahweh and other deities, see Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God. Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1990).

21. Dennis J. Wiseman, "The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon." *Iraq* 20 (1958):1. 268; see also Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School,* p. 81.

22. Weinfeld quotes the vassal treaty of Esarhaddon concluded during Assurbanipal's enthronement ceremony. Much has to do with homage to the king, but the text includes instructive clauses commanding the people actively to oppose all acts of rebellion and assassination attempts and to preserve the dynasty (ibid., p. 89).

23. In this regard, see, for example, Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School,* p. *282.* He also notes the example of the slave law in Deuteronomy 15:12-18 // Exodus 21:2-11 which we will review below.

24. The texts indicate that the care for the well being of the stranger should include such items as material provision, inclusion in the community and insuring justice. Provision is mentioned in the giving of meat not to be consumed by the covenant community (14:21), the sharing of the tithe every third year (14:29) and in the requirement to leave a portion of the harvest (24:19). The community should include the disenfranchised in some of its festivals (16:11, 14). The person on the fringe of society should receive fairness in legal matters (24:17).

25. For the laws of loans, see Deuteronomy 15:1-11.

26. Exodus 21:7-11 takes up the matter of a female slave. However, the Covenant Code legislation does not treat the woman in an equal way to the later Deuteronomic law. Exodus 21:7 states explicitly that the female slave is not to be released as the males are, but is treated like the concubine of the master. In this case, one notices that Deuteronomy 15:17b contradicts Exodus 21:7 by explicitly including the female slave in the possibility of manumission.

27. According to Deuteronomy 16:16, the Israelite males must appear before Yahweh at the specified spot three times annually. They must, however, not appear empty-handed (rêqām), but bring gifts according to the bounty God has provided. It seems that just as it would have been inappropriate for the faithful to make a pilgrimage without a gift, it is inappropriate to release a slave without some grant.

28. See Deuteronomy 15:18.

29. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School,* p. 290.

30. Weinfeld also notes that Deuteronomy displays a new concern for women in society. He writes, "The book of Deuteronomy shows a particularly humanistic attitude towards women. We have already noted the lack of distinction in its law between male and female slaves and its approach to the law of the seduced maiden. There are also a number of laws pertaining to conjugal life which have no counterpart in any other of the Pentateuchal books. They deal with such matters as the inheritance rights of an unloved woman's son (21:15-17); the protection of a wife's honor and reputation as articulated in the law of conjugal slander (22:13-19); consideration for a woman's intimate feelings (24:5: 'he shall gladden his wife whom he has taken'); and the law of the female captive (21:10-14). Though the laws themselves may be quite ancient, the fact that the author of Deuteronomy chose to incorporate them in his code attests to his humanistic orientation." see ibid., p. 291.

31. On the matter of Deuteronomy as "proper preaching," see Miller, *Deuteronomy,* p. 12.